

Neighborhood Networks



Childcare: Helping Parents Achieve Self-Sufficiency

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Multifamily Housing Programs

www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org
(888) 312-2743

Childcare: Helping Parents Achieve Self-Sufficiency

The guides in this series offer information on starting a center, creating programs and identifying center partners, marketing and media outreach, sustainability, funding, and much more. These updated guides feature new contacts, resources, case studies, and helpful information.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative established by HUD in 1995. Since then, centers have opened throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These community learning centers provide residents of HUD insured and assisted properties with programs, activities, and training that promote economic self-sufficiency.

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To receive copies of this publication or any others in the series, contact:

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All publications are available from the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Copies of this TA guide are available in Spanish and can be requested from the Neighborhood Networks toll-free Information Center at (888) 312-2743.

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Childcare: Helping Parents Achieve Self-Sufficiency

To work and achieve self-sufficiency, families must have access to safe, reliable, affordable, and convenient childcare that is available during the hours when they need it. Neighborhood Networks centers are addressing childcare needs in their communities in a variety of ways.

Along with providing work-related services such as employment training, general education, and job search assistance, many Neighborhood Networks centers also help residents access the childcare they need to find and retain jobs. Programs range from homework clubs supervised by center directors to more comprehensive services operated in partnership with community groups. Services range from adult supervision for children who are doing homework to organized group activities (e.g., computer skills classes, tutoring, academic enrichment programs, mentoring, and recreation). Some centers also help interested residents become certified childcare providers; a few centers operate early childhood development centers in conjunction with community partners.

To plan and provide childcare that is responsive to residents' needs, centers can follow these steps:

Step 1: Identify Residents' Needs

Residents' childcare needs depend on parents' job situations and children's ages. These needs will change as parents find new jobs and as their children grow. For example, some parents need childcare 8 hours each day, while parents who work part time typically seek fewer hours of childcare. While some residents work a night or weekend shift, others work more typical week-day hours. Infants and preschool children require very different childcare and activities than do elementary, middle, and high school students. To identify current childcare needs, it is necessary to collect the following information about

families on the property and in the surrounding community:

How many children need care? This number will help determine the demand for childcare by different age groups—preschool, elementary, middle, and high school children. Resident statistics compiled by property managers can provide a basic count for each group. Local elementary schools or existing childcare facilities can help gauge the need in the neighborhood. Local planning departments and councilmen's offices often can provide community population information, including the number of children in different age groups.

How do parents see the need? To fine-tune assessments of residents' childcare needs, it is helpful to understand families' current childcare arrangements as well as childcare that parents would like to have available. To find out, place a flyer or signup sheet in the rental office, under the door of each apartment, in the Neighborhood Networks center, or in a local job-training facility. (The sample flyer for afterschool care at the end of this guide can be personalized for any Neighborhood Networks site.) Visit each apartment to talk with parents or hold a meeting in the community.

Questions to ask:

- Are interested parents employed, in formal job training, or looking for work?
- What childcare arrangements do parents use now? Are they satisfied with these arrangements?

- Are the children who might attend childcare programs mostly of preschool, elementary, middle, or high school ages?
- What fees or contribution of time do parents see as fair and “do-able”?
- Are summer programs needed?
- Do parents foresee new childcare needs arising next year?
- Do any children have special needs?

Networking is important. When talking with parents, ask them if they know of others who might be interested in these services.

How do people who work with the families see the need? Talk with property managers, leaders of resident organizations, staff of local employment and training classes, teachers or staff at local schools, staff of local childcare facilities, and clergy or staff of nearby churches and other faith-based institutions.

Questions to ask:

- Do you see lack of childcare as a barrier to local parents who want to attend classes or who want to obtain and keep a job?
- How do residents cope with childcare needs now?
- Are irregular work hours or shift work a problem?
- Do you know residents who might be interested in becoming licensed home childcare providers?

Step 2: Identify Community Resources

For planning purposes and to provide information to residents, it is important to know what afterschool programs, summer programs, or early childcare facilities are currently available in the community.

Take a community survey of resources. Talk with parents, property managers, your HUD coordinator, or with teachers or staff at local schools, childcare facilities, or religious institutions. Determine if the following resources are available:

- Before- and afterschool programs (and their hours) at local schools, churches, and other community sites.
- Summer programs.
- Preschool childcare centers.
- Head Start programs.
- Licensed home childcare providers.

Use the Internet to locate local resources by ZIP Code through the National Child Care Information Center (www.nccic.org), ChildCare Aware (www.childcareaware.org/en/), and Afterschool.gov (www.afterschool.gov/cgi-bin/home.pl).

For Head Start programs, which provide childcare and other services to preschool children, contact the local school district, county social services, or the National Head Start Association (www.nhsa.org).

Prepare a list of community childcare resources that includes program name, location, hours, dates of operation, and contact names/phone numbers. Update this list (perhaps twice a year, when school begins in the fall and ends in the spring) and make it available to parents.

Find out if some residents are interested in becoming licensed home childcare providers.

Becoming a certified and licensed childcare provider can be a viable home-based business. To achieve this goal, residents must go through a certification process, obtain startup equipment, and learn small business skills. A Neighborhood Networks report states that of those residents who participated in Project Opportunity—a pilot program operated by Neighborhood Networks and The Children’s Foundation—75 percent of

program graduates owned and operated home-based childcare programs a year after graduation. (Download the report *The Childcare Challenge: Models for Childcare Services* from the Neighborhood Networks Web site.)

Helping families with childcare costs. Residents can obtain information about financial resources for childcare from the following organizations:

- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Family Assistance.** States may transfer up to 30 percent of their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to the Childcare and Development Block Grant fund to pay for childcare costs. Welfare-to-work funds also can be used for childcare. For more information, contact the state or county welfare office or the HHS Office of Family Assistance (www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/) or call (202) 401-9275.
- **The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.** This federal income tax credit allows parents to claim a credit for a portion of their childcare expenses while they are at work. Many states have similar provisions for state income taxes. Contact the Internal Revenue Service (www.irs.gov) or call (800) 829-1040.
- **One-Stop Career Centers.** Through a national partnership with the Department of Labor (DOL), Neighborhood Networks computer centers have a direct Internet link (<http://www.jccdrc.org/oa/oaresources>) to DOL's nationwide network of One-Stop Career Centers. DOL centers can help job-seekers find childcare, including childcare linked to welfare-to-work programs.

Step 3: Develop Community Partners and Market to Them

Market to community partners by presenting a vision and developing a specific plan that establishes a role for each partner. Neighborhood Networks centers bring to the partnership access

to an underserved community, a point of contact, and a potential space in which to hold activities.

Community partners can provide a wealth of resources, including expertise, advice, staff, volunteers, fundraising activities, and donations of computers and play equipment. The right community partners can make it possible to expand and enhance childcare programs or even help secure grants:

- Colleges often seek community partners, such as Neighborhood Networks centers, as sites for student internships and volunteer service projects or to qualify for grants (for example, HUD's Office of University Partnership grants: www.oup.org). Centers also can contact one of Neighborhood Networks' national partners—the American Association of Community Colleges (www.aacc.nche.edu)—to explore community college partnerships.
- Local and national service organizations, such as the YMCA (www.ymca.net/index.jsp), Boys & Girls Clubs of America (www.bgca.org), or 4-H (www.4-h.org), can make resources available to Neighborhood Networks afterschool programs.

Once your childcare program is operational, it will be important to keep in touch with partners and funding sources to sustain the program.

Community partners also can assist residents in setting up licensed childcare businesses. Local community colleges might have programs that help interested residents train, learn local regulations, obtain certification, and develop the necessary business skills.

Property owners or managers are often key partners who provide program space and other essential resources for Neighborhood Networks centers. Many centers have adapted space within the center for afterschool programs. At some properties, owners and managers have provided onsite space for Head Start programs that serve residents and the surrounding neighborhood.

Step 4: Establish the Program

Structure your childcare program to respond to local needs and available resources. Set program goals that are measurable (such as numbers of children to serve and hours to provide services) and establish a plan to achieve these goals. It can be helpful to work with a task force that includes local leaders, residents, and institutions. It is important to ensure that all stakeholders see the goals in the same way. Tasks include:

- Define how the program will be managed and carried out, and establish roles for the residents (including the residents' organization), property manager, center director, and other stakeholders.
- Assess any renovations or adaptations that might be needed to make the space work and determine how to carry them out.
- Establish goals specifying measurable outcomes, activities, and deadlines.
- Identify resources for staffing, equipment, and supplies.
- Specify how the program will deal with fees or parent time contributions, staffing, accounting, maintenance, accessibility, and security issues.
- Establish a mechanism to identify, discuss, and deal with unexpected problems.

Neighborhood Networks can provide guidance, expertise, and a planning process.

Step 5: Market the Program to Residents

Be sure that residents and stakeholders in the community know about the program. Market services to residents by placing flyers in the property management office, Neighborhood Networks center, community job-training centers, and other places that residents visit. Distribute flyers by mail or go door-to-door to talk with families. Set up a table at back-to-school

nights to talk with parents, and ask parents to tell others who might be interested in the program.

Publicity aimed at the wider community will also benefit residents. Mail flyers to school principals, clergy, elected officials, staff of organizations that serve children and youth, heads of local nonprofit organizations, and other community leaders. Inaugurate your program with an open house and a press release inviting representatives from local radio stations, television stations, and newspapers. Many community groups have expertise and media contacts and may enjoy taking on this publicity work.

Step 6: Assess Outcomes and Revise Programs as Needed

Evaluation should begin right away so that any needed program modifications can be made as soon as possible. Early steps might include monthly tracking of attendance and progress toward goals.

Local colleges may be able to supply student volunteers to plan and carry out a formal evaluation (under faculty supervision) at the end of a school term, on the program's anniversary date, or at other appropriate milestones. When preparing evaluations:

- Talk with parents, staff, and other stakeholders to identify problems.
- Design evaluation surveys so that parents and staff can easily read and fill them out.
- Compare statistics on program operations with original program goals.
- Pull all findings together into a brief report that (1) describes the childcare situation before and after implementing the program, (2) identifies problems, and (3) poses possible solutions.
- Consider how to share evaluation findings with parents and other stakeholders.
- Follow up to address problems.

Model Programs

Neighborhood Networks Learning Center (Grand Forks, North Dakota). Provides after-school care from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day that school is in session, with facilities at two sites: LaGrave Learning Center and Continental Homes (www.lagrave.com/). Contact: Lara Strobein, (701) 795–6300.

Mirabeau Family Learning Center (New Orleans, Louisiana). Presented “Remember the Time,” a play celebrating Black history and written by former special activity coordinator Danna Gilmore. The performance, featuring children in the center’s Afterschool Enrichment Program, took place at the Beacon Light Outreach Ministries Temple. Contact: Michelle Mills, director, (504) 288–0188.

Oakridge Early Enrichment Development Center (Des Moines, Iowa). Provides care for 70 children ages 2 months to 5 years, from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday–Friday. Contact: Sue Underwood, (515) 244–3021.

St. James Manor Computer Learning Center (Omaha, Nebraska). Provided a summer program in partnership with Catholic Charities. Contact: Debra Lang, manager, (402) 551–4243, debL@ccomaha.org.

Online Childcare Resources

- The Afterschool Alliance
www.afterschoolalliance.org
- ChildCare Aware
www.childcareaware.org/en/

- Childcare.gov
www.childcare.gov
- Head Start
www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb
- National Association for Family Child Care
www.nafcc.org
- National Child Care Information Center
www.nccic.org
- The Children’s Foundation
www.childrensfoundation.net/
- SBA Online Women’s Business Center Childcare Module
www.onlinewbc.gov/docs/childcare
- *The Childcare Challenge: Models for Child-care Services*
(Report from Neighborhood Networks and The Children’s Foundation)
www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/nnw/resourcesforcenters/nnwguide033.pdf
- Neighborhood Networks START Business Plan Management System
www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/nnw/nnwbusiness.cfm

Neighborhood Networks Afterschool Care for Children

Do your children need a safe, friendly place to go after school?

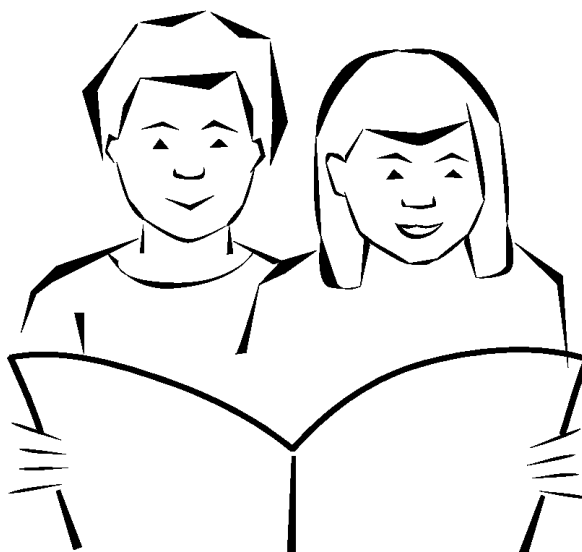
The _____ [name of property] Neighborhood Networks Center is hoping to offer an afterschool care program _____ [starting when?] at _____ [address of program].

What hours do your children need afterschool care?

- 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. _____
- 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. _____
- Later than 7 p.m. _____

What would you like us to do?

- Help children with their homework _____
- Serve a snack of milk and cookies _____
- Teach computer skills _____
- Provide computer games _____
- Provide tutoring for
 - o Math _____
 - o Reading _____
- Teach crafts _____



About you and your family:

Your name: _____

Names and ages of children: _____

Your address: _____

Your phone number: _____ (day) _____ (evening)

Fill out this flyer and leave it: _____ [name of property] management office,
_____ [address].

Or call: _____ [contact name and phone number].

Neighborhood Networks Information

For more information about Neighborhood Networks, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org or contact the Neighborhood Networks information center toll-free at (888) 312-2743, or TTY at (800) 483-2209. The Web site contains valuable information for centers, including:

HUD NN Coordinators

Neighborhood Networks coordinators listing.

Center Database

Information about operational centers and those in planning. Neighborhood Networks centers across the U.S. listed geographically by state.

Property Database

Information about Neighborhood Networks properties listed geographically by state.

Resources Database

Information about funding, technical assistance, publications, and Web site resources.

News Database

Articles, press releases, success stories, and grand openings relevant to Neighborhood Networks.

List of Conferences

Calendar of conferences and training events.

List of Resident Associations

List of Neighborhood Networks properties with active resident associations.

Neighborhood Networks Consortia

List of Neighborhood Networks consortia.

Senior Properties

List of senior properties with operational Neighborhood Networks centers.

Online Networking

Talk with Neighborhood Networks staff and stakeholders via online networking.

Publications

- **Fact sheets.** Fact sheets are one-page summaries of various topics relevant to the operations of Neighborhood Network centers. Fact sheets that are currently available include an overview of the initiative, health information, childcare, transportation, seniors, and community improvements at Neighborhood Networks centers.
- ***Network News*** (current and past issues). A semiannual newsletter that highlights national achievements for a wide audience, including partners and the public.
- ***NNewsline*** (current and past issues). A semiannual newsletter that highlights topics of interest to Neighborhood Networks centers and coordinators.

